

Newfield Township Planning Commission Meeting, October 12th, 2023

Chairperson Jansma called meeting to order at 7:03 pm.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

Rick R. present

Michael J. present

Mary H. present

3 Members Present.

Approval of Agenda

Rick R. motion to approve Mary H. support. Passed 3-0

Approval of Meeting Minutes from September 7, 2023, Meeting.

Motion by Rick R. , Support by Mary H. Passed 3-0.

Communications:

None

Old Business:

None

New Business:

Master Plan Discussion

-Survey results

-Community Engagement & Discussion

Survey closed with over 100 participants. Roughly 10 percent of the township participated. Results are as follows.

Demographics:

Age range for the largest group in the survey is 45-64 years old (39%), followed by (36%) which are 65 years + and lastly 30-44 years old (22%).

The majority of the participating residents have lived in Newfield Township 11 + years (59%).

The largest group of residents reported living in the southeast corner of the township (49%).

Economic Development:

Overwhelmingly 75 % of residents are in support of Newfield Township encouraging economic development and job creation opportunities.

72 % of the community is in favor of Newfield Township identifying "growth areas" where the development of commercial businesses and new housing is encouraged.

As far as agritourism is concerned 57 % of residents would like to allow farm markets, farm stands, wineries and cider mills with minimal regulation.

Similarly when asked if the Township should allow wedding barns, event halls or other related businesses, 50 % of residents believe they should be allowed but with restrictions.

Housing:

When asked about housing options for Newfield Township, 64 % of participants stated they would encourage affordable homes for first time buyers. 55% of participants also stated that the township should be encouraging new housing developments in specific areas.

When asked about ADU'S (accessory dwelling units) 53 % responded that ADU's should be allowed with minimal regulations or rules.

Infrastructure and Utilities:

When asked about cell phone reception, respondents were very mixed. 37 % stated reception meets their needs, 32% stated reception is spotty, 32% no, cell phone reception does not cover their needs.

When asked about water and sewer infrastructure the largest response (45 %) was to let individual homeowners decide about their water and sewer needs. Followed up 37% which stated the Township should build water and sewer infrastructure where density requires.

When asked about utility scale projects the results were mixed, 33 % stated target natural features such as lakes and wetlands for protection against utility scale projects.

32% were in favor of allowing landowners broad freedom to construct utility scale projects.

As far as regulating short term rentals, 53 % was in favor of allowing residential homeowners to offer property as short term rental.

43 % of residents satted to allow short term rentals when specific design and criteria are met.

Parks, Recreation, and Natural Areas:

When residents were asked what recreational opportunities respondents would like to see and possibly funded with tax money, there were a range of responses. The most popular response with 27% of votes was a children's summer rec program.

The next result with 19 % selection was linking bike trails with Hart or Fremont. 14% stated they would

like better access for launching kayaks and canoes, and 14 % would like more hiking and biking trails in general.

Residents were asked if the Township should preserve natural areas, rivers and lakes. The largest response with 38% was in favor of allowing landowners broad freedom to design their properties and rely on state regulations to protect natural areas; followed by 29 % of residents who would like to restrict lakefront and riverfront development to protect natural beauty and work with the natural ecosystem. Otherwise allow the build out of lakefront and riverfront homes.

When asked how the Township should manage publicly owned recreational areas 63 % of respondents would like to enhance the areas it already has.

48% of respondents also would like to add more area through applying for grants.

When asked about bike infrastructure results were mixed. 33% of residents believe the bike infrastructure is adequate for the Township; followed closely by 32% who would like to construct separate bike trails along major roads, and 27% who would prefer to construct bike lanes on the shoulders of major roads.

Participants were asked if they would be in support of adding in a dog park and or to the Township; 60 % were in support of adding these amenities, where 26% were not in favor of adding the amenities.

The survey asked about Off Road Vehicles (ORV) with the largest response of 40% stating the ORV infrastructure is adequate for the Township; and 23% stating that Township should construct ORV infrastructure such as trails.

Newfield Township Overall:

At the end of the survey, residents were asked if they were given \$100 to spend on Township services, what would they choose? Results were mixed with 27% would allocate funds to police enforcement, 13% would allocate to Fire & EMS, 10% would spend it on better cell phone reception, and 10% would spend it on parks and recreational programming for children and youth.

Respondents were asked what services they would like to prioritize, even if it meant a small increase in taxes; 43% chose the police department, and 31 % chose ambulance and EMS.

Lastly participants were asked if the Township should enforce the zoning ordinance; 54% of residents selected to minimally enforce ordinances, and 28% selected to proactively and aggressively pursue ordinance infractions.

Next Steps:

- Create a new map with all information (Jeff from Mckenna to draft the map and come back for feedback)
- Find areas where we want to preserve and some we want to grow
- In the scheduled November meeting; think of goals, high level and then objectives.

Zoning Administrator comments:

Permits are increasing, and quite a few are new houses. Inquiries from out of the Township are coming in.

Commissioners Discussion:

Once we have the full information, we can go further in depth about all the numbers. Next month we will discuss next year's meeting dates. I believe she should meet roughly 10 times next year since we have had so many special meetings with the Master plan and Zoning.

Public Comments:

Jim D: Handed each present member of the Planning Commission; News article "Ex-Michigan House Speaker sentenced to prison in marijuana bribery scheme. Public Hearing Fact Sheet and FBI Regional Corruption Hotline information.

Donna H: " We barely say anything. Some of us can use our common sense, some of us make outbursts like we just seen. It's unforgivable.

Chairperson Jansma offers adjournment.

Mary H. motioned for adjournment Mike R. support. PC 3-0 to end the meeting.